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## Virginia State Bar Association

*August 12th, 1909*

BY

WILLIAM M. THORNTON, LL. D.,

*Professor of Applied Mathematics, and Dean of the Department of Engineering in the University of Virginia*

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# Who Was Thomas Jefferson?

By WILLIAM M. THORNTON, LL. D.

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"If Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong.
If America is right, Jefferson was right."

Parton.

One hundred and sixty-six years ago there was born at the foot of Monticello Mountain in Virginia the great apostle of American Democracy, Thomas Jefferson. Eighty-three years later he died on the submit of that mountain after a life crowded with unselfish labors for his fellow-countrymen, crowned with achievements unparalleled for number and for weight, and consecrated through all its busy years to the noblest ideals of public service. Eighty-three years again have passed, and we may well gather here to review those labors, to evaluate those achievements, to renew our devotion to those ideals in virtue of which "Thomas Jefferson still survives."

He who ventures on such an essay may well stand abashed before his task. The theme is too vast, too extended. The fourscore and three years of Thomas Jefferson's life were, it is true, bound together into one splendid concord of high endeavour. Yet he touched our national life to nobler issues at so many points, that in the brief compass of such an address as this the mere enumeration of his services to his country would be impracticable. Let us rather strive to discover the man in his works, to reveal the wellspring of his moral energy, to disclose the method of his strangely varied activities.

Who then was Thomas Jefferson? Of whom was he born and what was his descent? Into what sort of a community did he come? What influences moulded that penetrating genius, that capacious brain, that ardent soul, during the plastic years of childhood and youth?

Imagine a vast belt of primeval forest, stretching from the upper limit of tidewater in Virginia back to the crest line of the Blue Ridge, a region which was still the hunting ground of Indians, where no axe had been heard, where no plough had yet been seen. Parts of this wonderful forest stand to-day and the people who dwell among them call them the Tall-woods, from the soaring height of the great trees which unviolated nature has nursed into a divine dignity and beauty. Virginia had been settled about a century before Governor Spottswood with his "Knights of the Golden Horseshoe" made their jovial expedition through this forest to the azure summits of that great mountain chain.

Ten years later (about 1727), the lands of Tidewater Virginia having been all taken up, patents began to be issued for these lands in the Piedmont. At first the great gentlemen of the Colony took out such patents for large tracts as a hopeful speculation: Nicholas Meriwether for 18,000 acres, Secretary John Carter for 9,300, Francis Eppes for 6,400, and so on. A tenant or two came up to make a clearing and validate the title, but these old Virginian aristocrats were too comfortable and happy on their big plantations to go out into the wilderness and give the Indians a chance at their scalps.

By 1732, however, *bona fide* settlers began to come in. They followed the river-valleys, first the James itself, then its various tributaries, bringing axes and the tools of carpentry and husbandry and a few slaves. They felled the stately trees, whipsawed the logs into planks, split the butts into shingles, built themselves houses, cleared a few fields and settled down to create a commonwealth.

To the place where the Rivanna, one of the tributaries of the James, breaks through the Southwest mountains—an irregular chain of rugged hills parallel to the Blue Ridge—came in 1735 one Peter Jefferson. Some trace his blood

back to that Jefferson who in 1619 sat in the choir of the little church at Jamestown and with his fellow-burgesses then and there planted the tree of representative government in America. It seems not unfitting that Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of American Independence should spring from such a stock. But of this, there is no clear evidence and for us it matters not. Our business is with Peter.

A man in all the noble senses of that noble word—a stalwart frame, a giant's strength, unflagging industry, unflinching endurance, indomitable courage, a perfect honesty—a massive, steady, silent, trusty, calm, foreseeing man. He could head up two hogshead of tobacco at once, weighing about a thousand pounds apiece, one with either hand. With Professor Joshua Fry, of William and Mary College, he surveyed the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina from the point where Colonel Byrd's line had ended, through a wilderness of wild beasts and Indians; he wearied out all his corps and leaving them scattered along the line pushed on; he ate up all his food, killed his mule, loaded the flesh on his own back and still pushed on; sleeping in hollow trees at night, to guard against ravening beasts, cutting his way by day through untamed forests, he still pushed on and blazed out the line, paced the distances, took the bearings, and came back safe and sound with his survey done. Such a man was our Peter—a rock on whom God might well build a State as on another He built a church.

Peter has been called a plebeian by people who were not ashamed to express thus their enmity to his illustrious son. He was a plebeian whose ancestor perhaps sat in the first representative assembly in America; who was the colonel of his county and held back the hostile Indians from her borders; who was the local magistrate and a vestryman of his church; who represented his people in the Virginian House of Burgesses; who was the chosen associate of a certain learned William and Mary Professor in the earliest State surveys; who

loved his Shakespeare and his Addison, his Swift and his Pope; who was the bosom friend of a Randolph and became his executor and the guardian of his only son; who married the daughter of the proudest of all the Virginian gentry; who was trusted and honoured alike by Indian chieftains and by Virginian gentlemen. Such a plebeian as Peter is a good enough aristocrat for me. Men have called Peter Jefferson a plebeian, just as they have called Luther an apostate and Lee a traitor. Well were it for this world of ours if there were more like them.

Let us turn our eyes now to another scene in the Old Dominion. It is the home of one of the great tobacco-lords of the Colony, Isham Randolph, third child of the William Randolph who settled on the James below Richmond, at Turkey Island, in 1660, and founded one of the great Virginian houses of the olden time. They were aristocratic folk—the Randolphs, tracing their lineage back to the Scotch Earls of Murray, the Ishams being English baronets. Isham Randolph himself is described by the botanist Bartram as a "generous, good-natured gentleman, well respected by most who are acquainted with him." He had a great house at Dungeness on the James above Richmond, and big plantations there and elsewhere. About this mansion it is said a hundred servants waited. He was the friend and correspondent of men of science in London as well as in America, and Bartram's introduction came to him from Peter Collinson, an English botanist, who warns Bartram as to his attire when he shall go to visit at Dungeness. Collinson, who was a dealer in woolen cloths, and had sent Bartram as a gift stuff for a suit, writes as follows:

> "One thing I must desire of thee, and do insist that thee oblige me therein; that thee make up that drugget clothes to go to Virginia in and not appear to disgrace thyself or me. For though

> I should not esteem thee less to come to me in what dress thou will, yet these Virginians are a very gentle, well dressed people, and look perhaps more at a man's outside than his inside. For these and other reasons pray go very clean, neat, and handsomely dressed to Virginia."

Into this stately home of "very gentle, well dressed people" our so-called plebeian Peter Jefferson was introduced by his friend, William Randolph, nephew of the host. The oldest child was a daughter, Jane, born in London in the parish of Shadwell, which had been her mother's home. Peter saw Jane, a girl of seventeen, lively and lovable, and loved her; and Jane, Desdemona like, conquered by tales of strength and fortitude told about that silent wooer from the back-woods, let her heart go out to Peter, and soon they were betrothed. Then it was that Peter Jefferson began his home-building at the foot of Monticello. William Randolph celebrated his own joy at the betrothal of his cousin to his friend by selling him four hundred additional acres adjoining his own tract of a thousand acres, the price named in the deed being "Henry Weathersbourne's biggest bowl of arrack punch." On this land Peter Jefferson built his home, a house like many another of that early day—a story and a half, four rooms to the floor, plain and big and comfortable—and then when all was ready he went back to Dungeness and brought home his bride. In her honour he called the place Shadwell. On it she lived all the residue of her days, as wife until Peter's sudden death in 1757, as widow until 1776. In 1770 the home was burned to the ground with all its contents, save young Tom's fiddle, but Mrs. Jefferson only moved over into an overseer's house. Thomas was the third of ten children born in the Shadwell home. While he loved and honoured his mother, he gave to the father whom he lost so early his peculiar devotion. To the end of life he never wearied of paying tribute to that father's far-seeing wisdom and affection.

## SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

Thomas Jefferson was fourteen years old when his father died and left him to be the heir of his fortune and the head of his family. Guardians were appointed for the lad—first Mr. John Harvey, and after his death Dr. Thomas Walker—but young Jefferson was so manly, so clever, so dependable, that the guardians let him go his own gait. He was a tall fellow, growing in the end to be six feet two inches, and in muscular strength and activity he surpassed all his companions. He had huge hands and feet, red hair, a reddish skin, a freckled face, high cheek-bones and a projecting chin. In youth ugly, at maturity he had acquired a pleasing person and in old age he came to be a handsome man. His eyes were hazel grey, his teeth perfect, his countenance bright and expressive. His manner was shy and cold, until acquaintance melted away reserve, and then became most sweet and engaging. He was always even in boyhood a fine horseman, a dead shot, a practised swimmer, a good dancer, a clever fiddler. His father had seen to it that he had good teachers, first Rev. William Douglass, and after that Rev. James Maury; the latter especially a broad minded man of genuine scholarship and high feeling. Under these instructors he learned his Latin and his Greek well, together with the principles of numerical arithmetic, and by the end of 1759 he came to feel that he was ready for college. In 1760 with his guardian's consent he was entered with advanced standing at William and Mary; in December, 1762, he had been graduated from the college, had been admitted as a law student to the office of George Wythe, and was headed for Shadwell with "Coke-upon-Lyttleton" in his trunk.

It was on his journey to William and Mary and during his residence there, that Jefferson first felt in its fullness the vivid warmth and charm of the aristocratic life of old Virginia. His mother's kinsfolk grasped their young kinsman's hand and drew him cordially into the charming circle of their

intimate friendship. His favorite professor, Dr. Small, the acknowledged center of intellectual force in the faculty at Williamsburg, won by the country lad's sweet manliness and quick intelligence, made of this beloved pupil the chosen companion of his leisure hours, introduced him to the notice and hospitality of the Royal Governor—the elegant, accomplished, brilliant, and generous Fauquier—and laid for him the foundation of a lifelong friendship with George Wythe, the great Virginian jurist. Jefferson called the Colonial Governor Fauquier "the ablest man who ever filled that office," and tells how much he owed of stimulus and instruction to constant association with these eminent men as they gathered day by day around the Royal Governor's "familiar table." On the other hand our young heir saw all the other phases of his novel life. William and Mary drew within her walls men like Thomas Jefferson and John Page; but she also had her full contingent of cocky young aristocrats with well lined pockets and empty heads; while the Governor's Court drew to Williamsburg all the grandees and all the debauchees of the Colony. On his own admission our Thomas was not unacquainted with horse races and cock fights, with card players and fox-hunters. In his first year he kept a few fine horses of his own and spent a trifle of money. But after that he settled down to hard work, varied by an occasional dance in the Apollo room with some beauty of the Court or an evening of music at the Governor's palace. So it was that she whom he named "the fair Belinda"—Mistress Rebecca Burwell—enslaved his young heart and gave him to drink of the wholesome bitter of disappointed affection. But through it all Jefferson remained the clear-souled, warm-hearted country boy. Fauquier was an inveterate gambler, but Jefferson never touched a card. Cousin Randolph or Cousin Cary might in the polite colonial phrase become "disguised with drink," but Jefferson stuck through all his youth to plain water. So he remained to the end of his days—temperate and clean beyond the common wont of men. The shameful

accusations brought by his political adversaries against his private life at a later date have been proved to be absolutely without foundation.* Through all the fourscore and three years of his life no vulgar amour, no vinous debauch, no fever of the card table ever smirched the fair fame of Thomas Jefferson.

And now I think we may begin our answer to the question with which we set out—Who was Thomas Jefferson? He was a man in whose veins mingled the two streams of blood which united have in all ages given to humanity its prophets and its priests and its kings, the plebeian red of Peter and the aristocratic blue of Jane; the progeny of manly force and womanly sweetness, of virile energy and feminine refinement. From the father came the big bones and hard muscles, the hunter's eye and the horseman's grip, the clear head and the steady poise, the love for science and for the outdoor life. From the mother came that suavity of address and sympathy of attention which made him so irresistible in private conference; that fluent style with either tongue or pen; that warmth of heart which beautified every hour of his domestic life; that tenderness of spirit, which made him mother as well as father to his orphaned daughters and called forth from their young hearts a mingled stream of adoring reverence and trustful love.

He was a man trained in both the great gymnasia of modern civilization—the country and the town. In his affluent but simple Albemarle home there came to him all the pleasures and the disciplines of rural life—hunting and fishing and swimming and riding; music and dancing and school and study; the unaffected courtesies of good neighborhood; the simple reverence of the old time religious faith; the social frankness of democratic equality. In Jefferson's boyhood not one of the great Virginian families had moved into Albemarle.

*In questions of paternity the testimonies of date and place are irrefutable.

His neighbors were all men like his father; and his father led, not by virtue of a social tradition, but by the unaided force of character and intellect, by a big heart and a big brain. Peter was a Democrat and Thomas was born into Democracy. Presently he found that this gymnasium had given him its best and he left it for Williambsurg; for the college and his beloved professor, Dr. Small, learned and liberal and cultured and wise, for the Governor's palace and the society of the brilliant, witty, generous, sceptical Fauquier; for the houses of his kinsfolk on the spindle side, great tobacco lords, horsemen, fox-hunters, orators, politicians, dandies, debauchees, belles and flirts. All taught him something; with a quite beautiful loyalty and lovingness he writes many years afterwards that it was Dr. Small who "probably fixed the destinies of my life." Even Rebecca Burwell had her little lesson for him. But after all these lessons he turned back and said that the earliest lesson was the best. He tells us that he set himself down deliberately to ask, Which shall it be? Horseman? fox-hunter? orator? or to use his own noble phrase:

"Honest advocate of my country's rights"?

The answer was never doubtful; old Peter's blood, old Peter's training, old Peter's tradition was too strong, and Thomas Jefferson sits among the immortals because he made himself just that—an honest advocate of his country's rights.

Once more, Thomas Jefferson, college graduate, had in his hands the keys at least to all the learning of his time. He had come to William and Mary from the hands of Maury, well grounded in Greek and Latin; and at the college he had built on this foundation so well that these early friends to the life of the spirit never forsook him. He read Latin and he read Greek freely and fluently down to his very last year; not in the prideful pose of a devotee of culture; not with the meticulous care of the modern philologian; but out of his

love for the beauty expressed by those old masters in the realm of thought and for the comfort of their wisdom and for the uplift of their lofty spirits. He fell into a blunder now and then, but he read on and loved them still. He added to this while at the college an effectual reading-knowledge of French, developed later during his Parisian residence into a speaking knowledge of the same tongue; and by private study in after life he gained a certain mastery of Italian and Spanish and a trifle of German. Under the powerful stimulus of Dr. Small's genius he learned to love mathematics and the natural sciences, although the practical bent of his own nature led him invariably to their applied forms; and it may have been from the same source that he received that impulse to the architectural studies which have left on American taste and tradition a stamp so beautiful and clear and ineffaceable. If we may trust his own auto-psychology, music and mathematics and architecture became at this time the "passions of his soul." If I may trust my own reading of his story I should say that politics was his legal wife; law her trusted handmaid; and music, mathematics and architecture three beautiful Geisha girls, kept for the solace of his leisure hours. Better than all this for him was it that he learned from scientific Small the true method of the scholar and so learned it that he applied this method to all the future problems of life. One example out of many must suffice. In his early studies of the law he found it laid down as the doctrine of the courts that "Christianity is parcel of the laws of England." This our young student, knowing the historic evolution of the Common Law, could not believe. He pushed his studies back, back through Coke-upon-Lyttleton, back through Henry Brackton, back to the laws of Alfred the Great. He discovered the source of the suspected error in a mistranslation of Prisot, where *ancien scripture* is rendered *Holy Scriptures*. He proved that *ancien scripture* meant just what it appears to mean, the *old records* of the courts, and nothing more. At once and

forever our young Virginian exploded a legal fallacy supported by such great authorities as Sir Matthew Hale, Sir William Blackstone, and Lord Mansfield. Long years before the modern slang about "die Quellen" was ever heard, Thomas Jefferson had traced the way of the scholar back to the ultimate sources of scholarship.

If then we ask ourselves, who was Thomas Jefferson, we must say that he was a young Virginian in whose veins ran the united streams of the blood of the democrat and the blood of the aristocrat, no longer discordant, but beating in one deep, harmonious, sympathetic pulse; in whose training the noblest influences of the rural life and the urban life had worked together to produce a vigorous and healthy body, a clear and disciplined mind, a sweet and unspoiled heart; for whose instruction the stores of ancient learning and of modern science had been both unlocked to a native genius which found in them its fit and proper food, and built out of them some of the great landmarks of our American civilization. Such was Jefferson the youth; what of Jefferson the man?

## LAWYER JEFFERSON.

We left our young Jefferson homeward bound with Coke-upon-Lyttleton in his trunk. Youth of the present day with one-tenth of his training and one-thousandth of his genius give two or at most three years to the study of the law. His friend Patrick Henry with no training and divine genius gave it six weeks. Jefferson working under the personal tuition of a great jurist and matchless teacher gave it five years. In these years he covered, however, a vast range of collateral knowledge, dug his way back into the very foundations of the Common Law, and made himself familiar with the Statute Law of England and of Virginia. He was not admitted to the Bar until April, 1767, but then soon took rank with the most erudite and the most successful lawyers of the Colony. His clients were

numerous and many of them wealthy and of the highest social rank. His professional income was for that age a large one, averaging for the seven years of his active practive (1767-1774) three thousand dollars a year. Out of the profits of his office he increased his patrimonial estate from 1,900 to 5,000 acres, supported the large family of his widowed mother, provided for the marriages of his sisters, Martha and Lucy, and made some headway on the creation of that home upon the summit of Monticello, whose appealing loveliness seems still to whisper the secrets of the master's deepest soul.

The active days and busy nights of this successful lawyer were not given wholly to money getting. The abstruser studies of legal science still claimed their share of his love and devotion. The early Virginian statutes existed in manuscript only. No files had been preserved in the government archives. We are in debt to Jefferson for the rescue of these precious documents of our earliest history and laws. Some of the copies recovered by him were unique; some rotten and obscure from age; some actually perished in the exposure necessary for the transcription. If posterity owes to Jefferson its undying thanks for these patriotic labors, Jefferson himself drew from them that peculiar and intimate knowledge of the political institutions developed through the long struggle for freedom in England and transplanted by Englishmen to the shores of the new world, which made him in the troubled years approaching the greatest and most powerful advocate of his country's rights.

The ten years of this period developed Jefferson in other aspects of his rich and complex nature. The purest and sweetest friendship of a life singularly rich in genuine friendships shed its perfume over them. Dabney Carr, his boyhood's mate, his sister Martha's husband from 1765 to 1775, growing day by day into a companionship and love closer than brotherhood itself, was torn away by death while the eloquent echoes of Carr's maiden speech still floated on the Virginian air.

Jefferson at once took charge of Carr's widow, supported and educated and launched in life all his six children, loving his sister the more tenderly for her sorrow and Carr's offspring as his own. The ashes of the two friends to-day mingle beneath the oaks of Monticello.

If there be an earthly relationship between man and woman, which has in it somewhat of angelical sanctity and sweetness, it is that between a lovely and loving sister and a devoted and high-minded brother. Free from the fetter of dependence, passionless and pure and holy, alike intimate and affectionate, compact of loyalty and sacred faith, it rings sound and true in every earthly trial as in every earthly joy. It alone of all human loves may dare to pass unpurged and unchallenged beyond the gate of paradise. Such a sister was Jane Jefferson, such a brother was Thomas. His peer in intellect, his rival only in their mutual devotion, the confidante of all his early ambitions and his early loves, warm with the fervor of deep religious feeling, gifted with a voice of rare sweetness and exquisite skill, she lives for us in the tradition of their music, when her harpsichord and Jefferson's violin accompanied their youthful voices in tender ballad or in sacred chant. This tie, too, death was to sever; the autumn leaves of 1765 hid with their golden glories the sister's new-made grave. Jefferson never forgot her; even in his old age the chanted liturgy of the church would bring back to him that sacred and beloved image, and he would tell over to his grand-daughters the story of her tenderness and her truth.

One other link in the chain of life was forged for Jefferson in these same days. Those first love passages with Rebecca Burwell now sounded through his dreams like far distant echoes of an earlier life. The sprightly Rebecca had with delicious promptitude thrown Thomas over, and given herself to his hated rival, when Thomas proposed to hang her up to dry, while he went a-touring for three years across the ocean. But this was ages ago, as lovers count time, seven long years,

and Thomas now began to sit up and take notice. This time 'twas not a maid but a widow; not Rebecca but Martha. What fine, good-sounding names men's sweethearts had in those distant days! But the gentle hand of the widow has not lost its cunning, whether her name be Mary, or Martha, or Gladys, or Gwendolen, and that hand will be always skilful in the nursing back to life of love-lorn swains. The time we are studying might indeed be fairly called the Widow's Age. Washington married the Widow Custis; Jefferson married the Widow Skelton; Madison married the Widow Todd; Hamilton married a charming spinster, but (if we may trust tradition) loved widows in the plural. The catalogue of charming widows and illustrious lovers would be a long one. Jefferson's widow was musical, beautiful, twenty-two, and an heiress. They were married on the New Year's Day of 1772, journeyed homeward in a phaeton, were caught in a blinding snow-storm, mounted on their horses' backs and plodded up through three feet of snow to the top of Monticello. It was after midnight when they reached their dwelling place and the servants despairing of their coming had gone to bed. But love, candles, a big fireplace soon filled with blazing hickory logs, a bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, laughter and song made it a happy home-coming, and for ten years this beautiful and gracious woman filled Jefferson's life with such happiness as only perfect love and unalloyed tenderness can give to man. The love-light kindled that night upon his hearth-stone never grew dim. On his wife's death-bed he vowed to her that he would give her children no new mother, and for four and forty years he kept his vow.

I have grouped together these sentimental episodes in Jefferson's life that we might feel their potency in the tempering of his character and the moulding of his life. His years of heart-happiness were the rich years of his constructive statesmanship. If of all the great men of his epoch he was the best endowed with patience and charity; if he alone among

them knew how to touch the souls of men with a man's firmness and a woman's gentleness; if his faith in the deep wellsprings of goodness and wisdom in his fellow-men never faltered; it was in large measure because his own heart, already formed by nature to love and to trust, had been nourished and strengthened by these three perfect loves; the perfect friend, the perfect sister, and the perfect wife. In men of supreme wisdom we find always united these two, the wisdom of the heart and the wisdom of the head.

### CONGRESSMAN JEFFERSON.

Jefferson's life enters now upon its period of noblest activity. He had served in the House of Burgesses of 1769, dissolved after five days by the Royal Governor on account of their treasonable sentiments, and had participated in the Non-Importation Agreement, then promulgated as Virginia's reply to the tyrannical action of the king and the Parliament. Of the eighty-eight signers of this agreement Jefferson was one.

In 1773 the House of Burgesses, exasperated still further by the encroachments of the crown, passed with practical unanimity the resolution creating the Committee of Correspondence, which should invite the appointment of a like committee in each of the other colonies and should take counsel with them on "various rumors and reports of proceedings tending to deprive his Majesty's faithful subjects of their ancient legal and constitutional rights." Jefferson drew the resolutions, Dabney Carr supported them with equal eloquence and force, and both Carr and Jefferson were named on the Virginian Committee. The Royal Governor again dissolved the House.

In May, 1774, the Boston Port Bill precipitated Virginia into further defensive measures. The House of Burgesses resolved that the first day of June, on which the bill was to go into effect, should be set aside "for a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, to implore heaven to avert from us the evils

of civil war." Jefferson drew the resolution, Nicholas introduced it, and it passed without opposition. The Royal Governor again dissolved the House. The members met in the Apollo Room, instructed their Committee of Correspondence to ask for an Annual Congress of deputies from all the colonies and further called a Convention to meet in Williamsburg on August 1st to elect the Virginian members of the Congress.

In August, 1774, the Convention met. Jefferson was detained by illness but sent two copies of a draft of instructions, such as he hoped to see given to the delegates to the Congress. This draft seemed too bold for the more conservative members. It was printed, however, as "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," was circulated through the colonies and sent to England. It was the first truly revolutionary paper issued by the American patriots, and was in fact the glowing ingot from which was forged the Declaration of Independence. The delegates to the Congress were elected and a new convention called to meet in Richmond.

On 20th March, 1775, the Richmond Convention assembled in St. John's church, Jefferson being one of the two delegates from Albemarle. It was here that Patrick Henry moved that the Colony "be immediately put into a state of defence" and after listening calmly to the earnest expostulations of almost every leading man in the Convention, supported his resolutions in an oration of such superhuman eloquence as men had never listened to before and never since have heard. The resolutions were passed by a decided majority, the Committee was appointed to carry out their provisions, and on this Committee, Thomas Jefferson was placed. Before adjournment the delegates to the former Congress were re-elected; but as Peyton Randolph would probably be called back to Virginia to preside over the House of Burgesses, Thomas Jefferson was chosen as alternate in that event. The Convention adjourned 28th March, 1775.

On 1st June, 1775, the House of Burgesses assembled in Williamsburg. Thomas Jefferson, now a member of both the House and the Congress, was present and at the request of the Speaker delayed his departure until the reply of Virginia to the "Conciliatory proposition" of Lord North could be formulated. At the Speaker's request Jefferson drew the paper, which on 10th June, 1775, was accepted by the House. Jefferson at once set out for Philadelphia, carrying with him a copy of this spirited and unanswerable reply. He reached Philadelphia on 20th June, the day on which Washington received his commission from Congress. With a certain dramatic fitness the news of Bunker Hill reached Philadelphia the next morning.

On 21st June, 1775, Thomas Jefferson took his seat in Congress. John Adams records the fact that he brought with him a "reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent for composition. Though a silent member of Congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation, that he soon seized upon my heart." Five days later he was placed upon the Committee to draw up for the united colonies a declaration of the causes of taking up arms. His paper was too radical in its statements for the more conservative members and was turned over by Jefferson to Dickinson for amendment. Dickinson made a new draft, into which he incorporated the last four and half paragraphs of Jefferson's paper. The document thus drawn was approved by the Committee, passed by Congress, and published to the world.

On 22d July, 1775, the Congress took up the "Conciliatory Proposition" of Lord North. A Committee was elected by ballot to draft their reply. Franklin, Jefferson, Adams and Lee constituted this Committee. The work was entrusted to Jefferson, who was known as the framer of the Virginian resolutions. This paper, which is wholly Jefferson's work, was adopted by Congress in the 31st July and on 1st August an adjournment was taken until 5th September following. Jeffer-

son returned to Virginia, was re-elected to Congress, 11th August, 1775, and spent the next eight months, partly in Philadelphia attending the sessions of Congress and partly in Virginia pressing forward the revolutionary movement among his own people. The loss of an infant daughter, September, 1775, and of his mother, March, 1776, were grave additions to his public sorrows and his public cares.

On 13th May, 1776, Jefferson was again in his seat in Congress. The Virginian Convention adopted their resolution in favor of American Independence on 15th May, 1776, and this was at once transmitted to the Virginian delegates in Congress. On 7th June, 1776, Richard Henry Lee moved that Congress declare that "These United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States." On 10th June, 1776, Congress appointed Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Sherman and Livingston to draw up such a Declaration. The work was devolved on Jefferson, his draft was approved by the Committee, and on 28th June, 1776, was reported to Congress. It lay on the table until the appointed date, 1st July, 1776. It was then taken up, debated for four consecutive days, amended in sundry particulars, and finally passed on 4th July, 1776.

The history of political development offers no parallel to this extraordinary catalogue of State papers of basic importance issuing from one brain within a period of two years. There were five of them, each a vital document for its time and a permanent addition to the literature of State-craft.

(*a*) The Summary View of the Rights of British America.

(*b*) The Reply of Virginia to the Conciliatory Proposition of Lord North.

(*c*) The Congressional Declaration of the Causes of Taking up Arms.

(*d*) The Reply of Congress to the Conciliatory Proposition of Lord North.

(*e*) The Declaration of American Independence.

Four of these were Jeffersonian *in toto*, and Jefferson fur-

nished the supremely significant sections of the other. They have been criticized for their rhetorical fervour, for the glow of passion which suffused them, for the deep undertone of a familiar and a common faith, which brought home their doctrines to the hearts and souls of American patriots. That fervour was the flame which kindled into a blaze of invincible energy the dormant fires of resistence to tyranny. That passion was the molten logic which taught Americans how to value truly their birthright of freedom. That faith in the bald commonplaces of political oratory turned those dead bones of rhetoric into living engines of power and wrath. He who criticizes the Declaration of Independence as a web of familiar sophistries, would say that the diamond is a mere bit of charcoal, or that the pearl is nothing but the ooze and slime of the ocean. The Apostles' Creed contains nothing but what was familiar to the earliest Christians, and yet it has crystalized the articles of the Christian faith into precious and immortal forms. What the Apostles' Creed is to Christianity, that the Declaration of Independence is to Democracy.

When we ask ourselves how Jefferson came to formulate these immortal postulates of his political faith, we can give no complete answer. Creative work, be it divine or human, has always been and will always be a beautiful and solemn mystery. We know not nor shall ever know how Homer sang his Iliad; how Shakespeare wrote his Hamlet; how Newton discovered his Law of Universal Gravitation; how Watt invented his Steam Engine.

So in our contemplation of Jefferson's creative work there must always remain a residuum of mystery. But we approximate a solution of the problem when we remember that here was a man who was born into a heritage of freedom; who had learned the lesson of ordered liberty from his father's life; who had grown to man's estate in full view of two irreconcilable ideals of citizenship, the democratic ideal, which was subduing the wilderness, and building homes, and creating a

commonwealth, and over against this the aristocratic ideal, which was already moribund in its self-generated sloth and debauchery and conceit; who having set before him two contrasting models—brave old farmer Peter Jefferson and brilliant Royal Governor Fauquier—had resolved to follow the one and eschew the other; who had fitted himself for his destined work by patient years of profound study and earnest years of devotion to his chosen profession; who had read more profoundly into the laws and institutions of the Anglo-Saxon race than any living man; and whose native gift for love and sympathy and trust had been broadened and deepened by the richest experiences of human life.

Thomas Jefferson early learned that he could never be an orator. Nature had denied him the gift of eloquence. But for this parsimony she richly atoned. She gave him a broad, comprehensive, foreseeing mind. She gave him a pen rarely equalled for facility and felicity and fluency. She gave him all the gentle arts of friendship, that other tongues might promulgate the thoughts of his teeming brain. She gave him the genuine spirit of sympathy, with the commoner rather than with the aristocrat, with the poor rather than with the rich, with the slave rather than with the master. This was the true secret of his power. His broad humanity was not a pose. His simplicity of attire, his plainness of manner was not a flout. His exquisite response to the deeper tones of popular conviction was not an echo. In him the nobler aspirations of his fellow-men became articulate in yet nobler forms. Shams never gain permanent power; and Thomas Jefferson through the long years of a great public life was the foremost statesman of his time and the greatest party leader of all the ages. Under him the Democratic party in America attained a solidity, a unity, a force never since equalled, and attained it because their master and their mouth-piece had an abiding and an unshakable faith in Democracy, because he was "not one of those, who fear the people."

JEFFERSON THE REFORMER.

On 2d September, 1776, Jefferson resigned his seat in Congress, declining also the mission to France, left Philadelphia and turned his face homeward. Anxiety concerning the health of a beautiful, fragile and loving wife was cause enough to draw the young statesman back to Virginia, now that his work in Congress had reached a culmination so glorious. The approaching session of the Virginian Legislature, the first under the new State Constitution, gave added force to his desire to live and labour once more within the boundaries of his native State. He was at once chosen a delegate from Albemarle county and on 7th October, 1776, took his seat in the Legislature.

The laws of Virginia, transferred from England to the Colony in an earlier and more cruel age, sorely needed revision. The great estates of the tobacco lords had been created and were unjustly protected under their malign influence; and the social order thus sustained was ready to perish from the vices always engendered by irresponsible power and protected wealth. The criminal code was inhuman and only its lax administration made life under it endurable. And the burden of the support of an established church fell with insulting force on the consciences of men who rejected its doctrines and righteously despised the great body of its priests. No man felt more poignantly than Jefferson the need of amendment; no man knew better than he how to carry out the work.

Of the vast number of measures, in perfecting which he acted alone or took a leading part, it must here suffice to give only a condensed list of the most important. These are:

(*a*) The establishment of new courts of Justice for the new State.

(*b*) The abolition of the laws of entail.

(*c*) abolition of the laws of primogeniture.

(*d*) The restoration of Rights of Conscience in Religion.

(*e*) The establishment of rights of Naturalization and Expatriation.

(*f*) The abolition of the Slave Trade (passed in 1778).

(*g*) The revision of the Laws; and in connection therewith

(*h*) The establishment of Religious Freedom (passed in 1786).

(*i*) The creation of a System of Public Education, and

(*j*) The gradual abolition of Slavery in Virginia.

Jefferson's plan for the gradual emancipation of the slaves was so hopeless of success that it was never even brought before the Legislature. He himself perceived that "the public mind would not bear it." With equal clearness he saw that unless some workable scheme of gradual emancipation were devised and adopted, the worst would follow. As the negroes increased, as the whole industrial system of the Slave States came to depend more and more on slave labour, the obstacles to any peaceful solution of the problem grew and multiplied. Shortly after Jefferson's futile proposition was brought forward, Monroe could say, "It is easy enough to kill slavery, but what will you do with the corpse?" The question confronts us to-day. Slavery is slain, but what are we to do with the corpse? Here it lies, stretched out from the Potomac to the Rio Grande in all its black, repellent bulk, and no man knows how or where to bury it.

The bill creating a System of Public Education was postponed until 1796 and then was passed only as to the Elementary Schools. Even this act was rendered nugatory by a hostile amendment, which left compliance with the law to the option of the county courts. Thus after waiting twenty years Jefferson saw the one measure which he deemed the article of a standing or a falling democracy, defeated by a subterfuge; and needed to wait for another twenty years before he began to effectuate even a portion of that first capacious plan in creating a university for his native State.

The other measures of fundamental import for the emancipation of Virginia he carried through either then or soon after.

The lurid phrase which leaped from his pen amid the heats of his later conflicts,

> *"I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man,"*

was but the morbid reflex of his saner mood in this great combat of his vibrant manhood. His assault upon the tyranny of the slave holder came to grief. His assault upon the tyranny of public illiteracy captured nothing but a watch-tower. But when the combat was over, the tyranny of cruel laws and savage penalties was gone from Virginia forever; the tyranny of a decadent caste, propped up against collapse only by the injustices of entail and primogeniture, was crushed; and the tyranny of an established church had been replaced by the equality of all Christian brotherhoods in the eye of the law as in the eye of heaven.

We cannot wonder that the Virginian aristocrats looked upon Jefferson as an enemy to his caste, as a traitor to his birth-right, and pursued him with hostilities and maledictions, down to the second and third generation. Nor can we feel surprise that the Episcopal clergy counted him among the deadly foes of that faith in which his ancestors had lived and in whose bosom he himself had been cradled. But it is strange that the dissenting clergy, the very men from whose limbs his hand had stricken off the shackles, should have united with the rest to revile him and to persecute him. In their homes and in their pulpits, in written document and public speech, they stigmatized as atheist and apostate, as sensualist and debauchee, this young ruler whom Jesus himself might have looked upon and loved. Not the least extraordinary outcome of all this animosity was his unbroken hold upon the great mass of his constituents. His profound conviction that the hope of Virginia, of America, lay not in the aristocrat nor in the priest,

but in the thoughtful mass of his fellow-countrymen, penetrated their souls and in spite of defamation held for him the unshakable citadel of their loyalty and their love.

Passing over the record of Jefferson as Governor of Virginia from 1779 to 1781, as not vitally connected with our immediate topic, we turn to his work in Congress, to which he was again elected in June 1783. Congress assembled at Trenton in November after the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, 19th October, 1783, had practically closed the war. Thence they adjourned to Annapolis, and there it was Jefferson's privilege to arrange the noble ceremonial with which Congress received the resignation of the victorious Commander-in-Chief and to compose the address delivered by the President of the Congress on that occasion. He was chairman also of the Congressional Committee which on behalf of the United Colonies signed the treaty of peace with Great Britian, in which was at last recognized that Independence which had been so eloquently declared by him in 1776.

Only two bills of fundamental and permanent importance were passed by this Congress, notorious as the most contentious in our history. Both were drawn by Jefferson. One was the bill establishing our present system of Coinage and Currency on the decimal basis instead of the duodecimal basis recommended by the Financier of Congress, Robert Morris. The incomparable advantages of the decimal basis have been attested not only by the experience of America, but by the imitation of almost every civilized nation.

The other bill was the Ordinance of the Northwestern Territory, establishing a plan of temporary government for this region, which Virginia with the consent and co-operation of the other States had ceded to the United States. The Jeffersonian bill was so drawn as to prohibit slavery after 1800 in all the region west of the meridian of the western cape of the mouth of the Great Kanawha. This provision was lost because only six of the States voted for it instead of seven. Had both the

delegates from New Jersey been in their places or had either one of Jefferson's own colleagues, Hardy and Mercer, sustained him, this clause would have been adopted and our great Civil War would never have been fought. Mr. Spaight, of North Carolina, deserves the unhappy fame of having compassed the defeat of this vital clause and brought upon his country the disastrous conflict over negro slavery. The later ordinance of 1787, one of the immortal documents in our political history, made free soil of the Northwestern States alone. Jefferson's law would have secured freedom not for the Northwest only, but for Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, the entire Louisiana purchase, Texas and every State west of the Mississippi River.

Jefferson had now reached the loftiest plane of his public career. His genius had blossomed into its consummate flower. His fertile and orginative mind had laid the broad and deep foundations of American Nationality and had transformed his native State from a mediaeval Colony into a modern Commonwealth. Virginia had received at his hands the triple crown of political freedom, of religious freedom, and of social freedom, while from him the infant nation derived not only the power to grow but the law of her future expansion. The cession of the great Northwestern Territory to the general government and the law of its organization into new States was his work; and this is the law, potent as the principle of universal gravitation, which has created and is creating a modern nation. Under its action the thirteen new stars which rose in the western heavens in 1783 have grown into a great planetary system, in which each star sweeps through its own orbit, while all the stars march together in eternal union along one glorious and predestined path.

If time permitted we might endeavour to complete the outline of Jefferson's great public career. We should see his deep soul brooding over the problem of his country's future development, until his thought swept beyond the Mississippi and

grasped the continental conception of her destiny; until the compulsive force of this vast ideal nerved him to brave--since he could not bribe—the great Napoleon himself; until the swift tides of European politics made of Napoleon's necessities Jefferson's allies and enabled him to pour the riches of Louisiana into the young Republic's lap.

We should see him year after year planning to open up for American occupation the great unknown region which divided the United States from the Pacific; suggesting explorations from the West as well as from the East; until at last he was able to send on this task Meriwether Lewis, his former private secretary, and William Clarke, brother to George Rogers Clarke, who had conquered the Northwestern Territory for Virginia. These bold pioneers, acting under Jefferson's commission, laid the foundation of our future successful claim upon the Oregon country.

We should see him as Washington's Secretary of State brought into collision with the most powerful and alert of all his adversaries, Alexander Hamilton; the one with his birthright in American soil, the other an alien serving an adopted country; the one a democrat with aristocrat lineage, the other a commoner with all the vacuous pride of a patrician; the one with his noble faith in the people, the other thinking of the mass as a vast, blind, raging Polyphemus, incapable of self-control and unfit to be intrusted with power. We should see Jefferson forced by this antagonism from his stand as an impartial and far-seeing patriot into the position of the founder and leader of a great political party. We should see the final overthrow of Federalism, after Federalism had done its appointed work for the nation, and the establishment of Representative Democracy as the living principle of the future for the American Nation.

We should see him in his brief retirement to Monticello, when wearied brain and tortured heart sank into the healing bath of quiet and peace and love. The serene skies of his

Virginian home bent their blue arch above him. The tender voices of his daughters and his grand-children caressed him into forgetfulness of the hatreds and turmoils of his storm-tossed years. From the shelves of his library, enriched by liberal purchases among the book-stalls of Paris, the sages and the saints of all the ages spoke their message of consolation and inspiration to his soul. It was this religious retreat into the sanctuary of his home which healed the wounds of his soul and made possible the triumphs of his later years. Even the duties of the Vice-Presidency did not remove him far or long from that best beloved of all the mountains of the earth. They served only to give him closer contact with the friends and allies of his public life. When by a "kind of miracle"—to use Hamilton's pungent phrase—John Adams was elected President, Jefferson rejoiced in his victory. He was a man careless of dignities, indifferent to profit, but avaricious of power. Under the stress of his conflict with Hamilton the postulates of Democracy had been exalted in his mind from the realm of reason into the realm of faith. They became his Articles of Religion, and the war against Federalism was a holy crusade. The Vice-Presidency was the commanding and impregnable citadel from which he conducted this war to complete and conclusive victory.

And then we should see him exalted to the Presidential office and preaching thence the simple evangel of Democracy by act as well as by voice and pen. In recent years contemporary documents have come to light that take the place of all those foolish inventions of political foes which made the vulgar gossip of alleged historians of the times. The dispatch of Dr. William Thornton, then in charge of the British Legation, to Lord Grenville in London, gives the authentic story of his inauguration. "Mr. Jefferson," he wrote, "came from his own lodging to the Capitol on foot, in his ordinary dress, escorted by a body of militia artillery from the neighboring State, and accompanied by the Secretaries of the Navy and the Treasury,

and a number of his political friends in the House of Representatives." The inaugural address was delivered in the Senate Chamber. The oath of office was administered by Chief Justice Marshall. Samuel Harrison Smith, the founder of the National Intelligencer, in a private letter to his sister, dated 5th July, 1801, gave an interesting account of Jefferson's first official reception. The guests, who included "all the public officers and most of the respectable citizens and strangers of distinction" were ushered into the room "where sat Mr. Jefferson surrounded by the five Cherokee Chiefs. After a conversation of a few minutes he invited his guests into the usual dining-room, where four large side-boards were covered with refreshments, as cakes of various kinds, wine, punch, and so on. Every citizen was invited to partake. All appeared cheerfully, all happy. Mr. Jefferson mingled promiscuously with the citizens, and far from designating any particular friend for consultation, conversed for a short time with every one who came in his way." In her private note-books written in 1841, and not intended for publication, Mrs. Smith, who had been Margaret Bayard, of Delaware, and came thus originally from the very camp of his enemies, tells us something of Jefferson's attire and dress. "If Mr. Jefferson's dress was plain, unstudied, and sometimes old-fashioned in its form, it was always of the finest materials. In his personal habits he was always fastidiously neat; and if in his manner he was simple, affable and unceremonious, it was not because he was ignorant of, but because he despised the conventional and artificial usages of courts and fashionable life. His external appearance had no pretensions to elegance, but it was neither coarse nor awkward; and it must be owned his greatest personal attraction was a countenance beaming with benevolence and intelligence." Such cotemporary testimonials are the best refutation of all the stupid and malicious calumnies which once gathered about Jefferson's great name. His slovenly attire, his vulgar manners, his rude address, his dusky concubines, his

flouts at religion, his flatteries of the vulgar, all these were the cheap inventions of an ignoble political hostility. Once they did harm, to-day they are impotent. They simply pollute the pages on which Scandal masquerades as History. They are no longer able to shake the faith of mankind in the prevalent virtue, the lofty genius, the broad benignity of the greatest statesman of the modern world. Well may we say with Parton,

> "If Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong.
> If America is right, Jefferson was right."

Last of all we should see Jefferson once more in retirement on his mountain home. The storms of politics rage about the levels beneath his feet, but he heeds them little. For around the head of this great, calm, foreseeing, deep-pondering man the serene heavens pour their radiant light. He sees that the great destiny of the nation he had aided to bring into being, whose infancy he had helped to foster, whose vigorous youth he had contributed to nurture and to train was in the safeguard of that great power which guides the fortunes of men and of nations. His heart is at rest, his soul reposes in the confidence of a certain hope. And now he sets about the last work for his country's good that his hands were to find to do. He takes up again the problem of public education, which had occupied his earliest days, and he builds for Virginia a State university, the first true university in America, the prototype of all those great State schools and universities, which to-day bring their united energies to the work of exalting the intelligence and virtue and patriotism of our common country.

The university which was Jefferson's ideal, the university which he strove to create, was a great democratic seminary, organized not for the advancement of learning, but for the training of men. Its product was to be not savants, but citizens. To his own university and to others like it, he looked for that gift of intellectual freedom which can alone make the

DEC 27 1909



Representative Democracy of America the ultimate solution of the great problem of State-craft. Slaves are unfit to govern either themselves or others, whether that slavery be of the body, or of the soul, or of the mind. Happy in all things, in his death as in his life, the old man was given time to accomplish this ultimate task and then lay down to rest. On the western slope of Monticello, facing the sunset glories of the region which his genius added to his country's domain, his ashes lie beneath the simple shaft on which stands the brief record of his wondrous life. He felt that heaven had granted him the grace to do for America three noble things—to achieve for his people political freedom, to establish for his country religious freedom, and to organize the foundations of intellectual freedom, and so he wrote for himself this modest epitaph:

Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author
of the Declaration of Independence
of
The Statute of Virginia
for Religious Freedom and
Father of the University
of Virginia.

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